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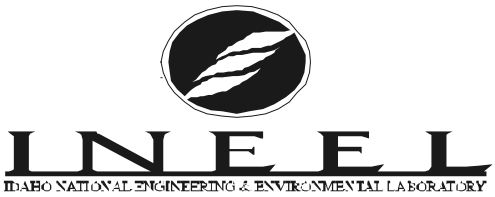

INEEL Worker Involvement as a Means of Controlling Their Own Safety

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ISM at the Activity Level - Working Safely and Efficiently; Protecting the Worker, the Public, and the Environment

LOCKHEED MARTIN

"Worker Perspectives on ISM"
-- Worker involvement in the ISM process --

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ABSTRACT

Using the eighth Guiding Principle of Integrated Safety Management (ISM) -- Worker Involvement -- will move the work force on a forward path from just doing work to doing work safely. This path can be achieved by changing the safety culture in the work place. The work force is more likely to accept a process that will allow them to be accountable for their own safety if they feel ownership through Worker Involvement. The marrying of the Voluntary Protection Program (VPP) and ISM will give workers this ownership. One of the concerns in implementing ISM is that, unless you keep it simple by applying the five core functions and eight guiding principles, you may over load the work force with more information then they need. If you can show them how their job applies to the five core functions, along with using VPP to change their safety culture, you will build a work force that will set the standards for doing work safely. Using INEEL's experience, this paper focuses on input from the work force and the culture necessary to implement ISM.

IMPLEMENTING ISM AT INEEL

To formalize implementation of ISM at INEEL, the first step was to train the work force to the ISM process. This training met with mixed reviews, depending from which work discipline the reviewer came, i.e.,

- Crafts
- Planners
- Safety and Health Professionals
- First line management
- Middle management

Within the confines of the 890 square miles at the INEEL, including the in town facilities, there are nine facilities or "areas". Being so large and diverse added to the complexity of implementing ISMS.
The actual implementation of ISM started with five areas, out of nine, to serve as pilots for Phase II verification. The other four areas would use a "lessons learned" approach from the pilot areas to establish their implementation plan. One of the primary lessons learned from INEEL's implementation of ISM to date is that worker involvement in ISM is critical to its success. This is discussed further in the sections below.

KEYS TO IMPLEMENTATION EFFORTS

Based on INEEL's experience in implementing the ISM process, including feedback received from all levels of the workforce, the following attributes were found to be key to successful implementation.

- Integrating VPP and ISM initiatives with worker involvement
- Building a positive working relationship between workers and first-line management
- Build a "questioning attitude" in the work force

- Tailoring training appropriate to the craft
- Minimizing paperwork

Each attribute is discussed further below.

Integrating VPP and ISM initiatives with worker involvement

The integration of the VPP and ISM initiatives with worker involvement will give the workers ownership of their own safety. ISM defines the safety management process, while VPP provides the process to fundamentally change the safety culture at the worker activity level of the ISM system. Thus, a strong worker involvement program like that provided by VPP, will significantly enhance the success of ISM implementation and institutional acceptance, particularly at large complex sites like the INEEL. A balance in complexity must exist when implementing these processes. Unnecessary paperwork often overwhelms workers when basic concepts and a clear description of requirements at the worker level would be sufficient. Careful implementation of ISM and VPP will accomplish this balance.

Building a positive working relationship between workers and first-line management

Building a positive working relationship between workers and first line managers is essential. The old way of labeling workers as troublemakers discourages feedback. Feedback from workers now needs to be accepted as valid concerns and discussed with first line managers in a positive way. Some workers have a "wait and see" attitude before accepting any new program. If the "fence sitters" see that the worker input and feedback process is not being accepted in a positive way, they will not feel a part of the team and therefore will not accept the overall ISM process. Middle management's most important role in implementing ISM is creating a positive feedback "accepting" attitude for first line management and the work planners. ISM has areas where worker involvement is paramount for its success. If first line management cannot find the time or personnel for workers to be included in the necessary input and feedback process, **then you don't have ISM**.

Build a "questioning attitude" in the work force

Building a questioning attitude in the work force is another role middle management must play. Procedures and work packages can no longer be accepted with a "verbatim compliance" attitude. They must be questioned at each step of the process. The crafts must be encouraged to "stop work' at any point of the process and ask questions if they do not feel comfortable with what they see, without fear of reprisal or intimidation. This is also an attitude adjustment for first line management and planners. Having deadlines and milestones to meet can be a major roadblock in allowing the crafts to "stop work" or turn a work package back to have changes made. If foremen encourage craft workers to continue, reasoning that "We know what they mean", just to get the work done, the process will fail; if not now, then possibly later, when someone doesn't know what "They meant'. When the crafts get a work package with Job Safety Analyses (JSAs), Hazard Identification Analyses (HIAs) and various other analyses, they must not accept them as all encompassing but be allowed and encouraged to question their completeness. As each work discipline interacts with the craft at different steps in the process they should encourage and help develop the questioning attitude. The secondary hazards are the ones that will "Get you" and the crafts need to be encouraged to help identify and have input in the mitigation of them.

Tailoring training appropriate to the craft

The training of the crafts to the ISM process appears to be a particularly sensitive issue at this site. Not recognizing the depth to train to for each work discipline could cause some worker to resist accepting ISM. They feel that the same massive amount of training is given to all employees, regardless of the level of knowledge they may really need. For months they have spent hours and, in many cases, days a week in training, much of what may have little relevance to their daily work tasks. They are like sponges that are full of water (training), and it now seems to be running off, because the sponge can't absorb anymore…but the training just keeps on coming. Often, the decision is to train 6000 employees at the same level because it is easier than making the training commensurate with the workers' job performance. For example, a pipefitter may only need 2 hours of training to understand the work control process but a planner may require 5 days. This could turn the employee against accepting the process. Since under ISM, safety is built into the work package itself, through walk downs with the planners, pre-job walk downs and post job feedback , the question is … "Why all the extra training?" Employees need to be trained to the ISM process, with hazard identification training to help them interact with other work disciplines. It does not take a lot of training for the craft workers to recognize the differences they will see when ISM is implemented. For example, when a planner asks a worker for their input relevant to a particular job and the foreman takes them on a pre-job walk down plus a post job briefing -- that is ISM.

Minimizing paperwork

One of the biggest concerns of workers is the "massive amount of paper" that is necessary to get the work done. If the way they are performing their jobs today is the same as it was a year or two ago, then what is all the paper work for and is it really making the job safer? There does not appear to be a direct correlation between the amount of paper produced for a job and the safe performance of that job. The question often asked by workers (warehouse, office, custodian, etc.) who do not get work direction from paper is: "How will ISM help me be safe?" After their initial training: "Will ISM remain effective for them?" For those workers, communication is the key to ISM. Communication makes the long term, positive, working relationship with management very important in doing work safely. This all leads back to building a safety culture found in VPP and keeping ISM simple, with strong worker involvement in both processes. **Safety is not in the paper, it is in the people.**

MOVING TO A WORKER INVOLVEMENT CULTURE

The Worker Involvement culture was started about 3 years ago with VPP. It has grown in the last 13 months with the workers building "Worker Involvement" Programs. Most of these are worker owned and controlled, with management support.

The Worker Applied Safety Program (W.A.S.P.) was developed as an accountability tool for the workers to use in building a safe work place. Workers conduct observations of each others' safety practices while working. Feedback, shared following these observations, focuses on positively reinforcing safe behavior and sharing concerns regarding behavior that might result in injury. The idea of this process is to decrease injuries by reducing "AT RISK" behaviors and change the culture and attitudes, based on facts, to create a safer working environment.

Workers believing that the Unions, Management and DOE working together, in a positive way, to establish standards for safety started the Union Safety Summits. The first Summit was historic in that all parties signed the VPP Statement of Endorsement that is a commitment to support the efforts to implement the DOE-Voluntary Protection Program at the INEEL. The agenda for these Safety

Summits always includes safety concerns, which are resolved before the next Summit. A Memorandum to all department and contractor employees from Secretary Richardson, dated March 4,1999, in part requested "that each DOE site establish a regular forum for discussing safety performance with contractor and labor representatives…identify safety problems and issues early and ensure that they are resolved in a timely manner". The Summits were started in December of 1998, which places the INEEL ahead of the curve and meets one of the Summit's goals that "We will set the standards for safety for all of the DOE Complex".

Using Skill of the Craft, workers are involved in the writing of procedures for the equipment that they operate. By using the eighth guiding principle of worker involvement, they are able to apply one of the core functions of ISM by identifying hazards in their work place. They are also involved in rewriting site wide procedures, such as the Stop Work Authority procedure. With their input, workers reduced it from 16 pages down to five and added steps so that when a person stops a job, that person has to sign off on it before restarting the job.

Workers are involved in site-wide Safety Meetings. The focus of these meetings is to talk about the Operational Excellence Program (VPP, ISM, Conduct of Operations, and Conduct of Maintenance) and how it will help workers gain ownership of their own safety.

Participation in the Facility Excellence Program, where at least two craft people are involved in each walk-down, is a good place to practice the hazard identification training they received.

Safety Bowl, Lockout/Tagout procedures and proficiency programs, and the ICARE process are more ways that workers are building a safety culture team with DOE Management that will set the standards for all the DOE sites in the complex.

CLOSING

In implementing ISM at the INEEL, something has been happening over the past few months that has needed to happen for over 20 years -- that is the standardization of the work control process. If ISM is to fail, it will be from complacency. When the paper work becomes overwhelming, the workers will not pay attention to the details. When the hazards are "boiler plated" into the work package, we will meet the requirements for audits but will have missed the intent of ISM.
ISM belongs to the work force and, if given the chance through ownership, we will take care of it.

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